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This paper is for internal discussion among the Chicagoland TDU Steering Committee Members, please do not distribute.

The recent strike of Teamsters at United Parcel Service may be a turning point for organized labor, but regardless of that, it better be a call to action for activists in our union. On a national scale the union was successful in winning public support for the strike. This was reflected in almost completely favorable support for the union's bargaining position in the media reports. However from the inside the union, the strike showed the widespread disorganization among the rank and file union members. It also exposed a union officialdom who were generally unwilling or unable to organize their members to effectively fight the bosses.

At the International level credit must be given to the Carey Administration for making an honest effort to keep the rank and file members informed during the negotiations. The IBT also put organizers in the field in an effort to keep the members informed and organized during the strike. However there is only so much that can be done from the top without the full support of the bureaucracy at the Joint Council and local level. The IBT organizers that were put in the field made every effort to work with the local unions with members at UPS, but also went directly to the members where the local officials were uncooperative. This was unheard of in our union under past IBT administrations.

On the downside the IBT's demands were too vague from the start . It was not until late in the campaign for example that the figure of 5000 full time jobs was publicized. That falls far short of what is needed at UPS or what could have been won. Also the strategy of letting the trucks cross the picket lines was demoralizing, and was a losing strategy. Had it not been for the ambulatory picketing and solidarity from other unionists and community activists, the strike could have been lost.

The support for the contract campaign and strike by the Local union bureaucrats was uneven. The best scenario for example was in Seattle Local 174, there the Local Union saw to it that the membership was plugged into the IBT's information pipeline and it made every effort to disseminate information to it's members and keep the members unified and active during the strike. However what went on at LU 174 was not the norm, in fact far more widespread was what occurred in Detroit LU 243. In 243 the officials gave lip service to the campaign and strike but the organization of the members was left up to the shop floor activists and TDU militants in the area. Contract and strike information was distributed mostly by rank and file activists. Then of coarse Frank Wsol the principal officer of Chicago Local 710, who's members are covered under a separate agreement that patterns the Master UPS Agreement, refused to call a strike against UPS. This meant that other striking locals, the IBT organizers, TDU activists, and community supporters had to picket at 710 represented UPS facilities. These are just a few specific examples of the way the officials related to the contract campaign and the strike. It is safe to say that generally, with only a few exceptions, the local union officials did very little to organize their members effectively during this campaign.

There is no denying that the solidarity among all the strikers was praiseworthy. More then anything this is what won the strike. It is certain that UPS expected scabbing especially by the part-timers who generally are out of the mainstream of the union, but this never occurred. However it is safe to say that grassroots organization among the members was lacking. When the old guard was in power TDU provided this organization but since Carey has been in power TDU has ceased this activity. TDU missed a valuable opportunity in not formulating separate demands

and independent organization. Because of this situation in most places the strike was poorly organized with the members waiting for the officials to take the lead. Now that the strike is over there is a golden opportunity for TDU activists to point out this weakness to the members at UPS and recruit to TDU.

Chicago was very much a mixed bag concerning this struggle. As stated above Local 710 members with Frank Wsol in charge were not called out on strike although the overwhelming number of 710 members we talked to supported the strike. This strike proves more then ever that "union bosses" like Frank Wsol need to be moved out of this union. But Wsol and people like him are not the only weaknesses exposed by this strike. It also showed that the members at UPS were poorly organized in Local 705 a so called "reform" local in Chicago.

Although Local 705's officials called a strike, it was clear from the beginning that they were reluctant to do so and that an organized plan was missing. This was exemplified by the fact that 705 Officials were telling people at the Jefferson hub only weeks before the contract deadline that there was not going to be a strike. Also before and during the strike information was scarce, contract bulletins were not regularly distributed throughout the local. For example members at the Bedford Park hub were regularly updated as to the status of the negotiations, but members at Jefferson St. and the CACH were in the dark. Part-time members, many young and new to the union, were never informed as to what was expected of them during the strike. Thousands of them were never organized to take an active part in the strike. Because of this many feel they were cheated out of their strike pay by the union. Also now that the strike is settled it is not clear that the local will call a meeting to discuss the terms of the proposed contract.

More then anything else the strike at UPS shows that there is a profound lack of organization at the grassroots level in our union. It also shows, with few exceptions, that the Officials are unwilling or unprepared to seriously fight the employers who have been on the offensive for two decades. UPS management is on record as stating that in five years they will be prepared to break any strike by the Teamsters. Members at UPS need to prepare for this and UPS management's inevitable attempts to victimize activists and gut any contractual gains made in this agreement.

What all this should mean to us in TDU is that there are incredible openings for us to organize the members at UPS. We also will have the opportunity help develop the grassroots leadership our union desperately needs. But first we must recruit to TDU and that means following up with all the members we met during the strike. We need to win them to the understanding of grassroots unionism. We must use the experience of this strike to convince them of the need for Independent Rank and File Organization. This task is urgent, we can be sure the employers will be doing whatever is necessary to be sure this victory does not start a trend. We can also be sure that the Trucking Bosses are preparing for the Freight Contract now and will be ready for us come April 98. Will we be ready for them?